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SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

NEIL GAIMAN

TEDDY KRISTIANSEN

SANDMAN

THE KINDLY ONES

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Lyta Hall's infant son Daniel has been stolen from her. Lyta believes the child to be dead, and also believes, perhaps erroneously, the Lord of Dreams to be responsible.

Lyta has gone on a spiritual journey that has taken her to the Furies—the aspect of the triple goddess who takes revenge on blood crimes. Her body, meanwhile, remains in Los Angeles, in the care of a witch who is currently calling herself Larissa.

Lyta's friend Carla discovered that Loki was involved in Daniel's kidnapping, and was killed for her discovery.

Lyta's downstairs neighbor, Rose Walker, has gone to England, having received a message that her late grandmother needed to send her a message. So far no communication has been apparent.

The Lord of Dreams, for his part, has despatched Matthew the Raven and the newly recreated Corinthian to find Daniel and bring him to the Dreaming.

Daniel was last seen being placed on a fire by Loki and Puck.

Delirium, the youngest of the Endless, visited Destiny, the oldest, seeking her lost dog, and she received advice, of a somewhat ambiguous nature.

Now read on...

ON MOONDAY, THE KING OF DREAMS GAVE AN AUDIENCE TO FIVE SMALL CHILDREN, WHO HAD TRAVELLED A LONG WAY, SEEKING THEIR LOST MOTHER.

WE MET THEM IN A HALL FILLED WITH SCARECROWS, WHO WHISPERED AMONG THEMSELVES IN THE VOICES OF THE STARS OF THE SILENT SCREEN.

DANCING SALAMANDERS BROUGHT THE CHILDREN SILVER PLATES PILED WITH EXOTIC ICE-CREAMS OF VARIOUS FLAVORS, AND WITH FRUITS THEY HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE AND WOULD NEVER SEE AGAIN...

ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD DREAM OF THEM, ON RARE OCCASIONS, UNTIL THEY DIED.

GRAVELY, THE LORD OF DREAMS LISTENED TO EACH CHILD PLEAD AND BEG; AND THEN, AT THE END, HE DREW A DOOR IN THE AIR WITH HIS FINGER, AND THE CHILDREN WALKED THROUGH IT, INTO THE REST OF THEIR STORY.

AND ON MOONDAY, HE ARBITRATED IN A DISPUTE BETWEEN THE KNIGHT OF CLOUDS AND THE BODY POLITIC.

HE AWARDED THE MAGIC LANTERN SHOW TO THE KNIGHT OF CLOUDS, ALTHOUGH HE PERMITTED THE BODY POLITIC TO RETAIN CUSTODY OF THE SIX SCREAMING STONES AND THE SNOWS OF YESTERDAY.

HE WALKED FROM HIS CASTLE TO THE DREAMS OF A SMALL BOY IN HONG KONG. HE REMAINED THERE FOR SOME MINUTES, OBSERVING QUIETLY. THEN HE LEFT.

HE ATE IN THE DREAM OF THE HEAD CHEF IN THE BEST HOTEL IN SRI LANKA, A DREAM OF A CERTAIN MEAL DESCRIBED TO THE CHEF BY HIS GRANDFATHER. THE MEAL CONSISTED OF ALMOST FIFTY SEPARATE COURSES, AND OVER TWO HUNDRED DISHES.

THE KING OF DREAMS TASTED SPARINGLY OF A VEGETABLE DISH, AND A LITTLE PLAIN RICE, AND WAS CONTENTED BY THE PERFECTION OF EACH.

HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO PERMIT THE SENDING OF A DREAM OF WARNING TO A TEENAGED GIRL IN SOUTH AFRICA. WITH THIS DREAM TO DRIVE HER, THE GIRL WOULD GROW UP TO TAKE CHARGE OF THE COUNTRY, TO UNITE ALL DIVIDED FACTIONS; WITHOUT IT, SHE WOULD BECOME A NURSE.

HE CAME TO HIS OWN DECISION, AND RELAYED IT TO THE TRIBAL GODS FROM WHOM THE REQUEST HAD COME. HIS DECISION BROOKED NO ARGUMENT, HAD NO APPEAL.

AND THEN, TO CONCLUDE THE DAY'S WORK, HE GAVE AN ELDERLY TORTOISE, ALONE ON HER ISLAND THESE PAST TWO CENTURIES, A DREAM OF HER LOVE, ROASTED BY PASSING SAILORS LONG SINCE FOR HIS RICH GREEN FLESH.

ON TRUESDAY, THE PRINCE OF STORIES LISTENED TO THE TALE OF A NIGHTMARE IT HAD CREATED A HANDFUL OF YEARS BEFORE, AND SENT OUT INTO THE WORLD.

THE NIGHTMARE BROUGHT GIFTS: A PHOTOGRAPH OF A SMILE, A HANDFUL OF DRIED THYME, AND A CLAMMY, FAT SILVER-AND-RED CLOWN TOY, MADE OF SOMETHING NOT UNLIKE RUBBER.

HE GAVE IT WORDS OF APPROVAL IN RETURN, AND IT BLUSHED BLACK WITH PLEASURE.

THEN THE PRINCE OF STORIES WALKED THE BOUNDS OF THE DREAMING, BEGINNING WITH THE SHORES OF NIGHT, AND FROM THERE TO THE BORDERS OF THE SHIFTING PLACES.

HE TOOK SHIP IN THE ARCHIPELAGO, AND INSPECTED THE SKERRIES, TALLYING EACH ONE, NO MATTER HOW INSIGNIFICANT.

HE RODE A BLACK HORSE ACROSS THE LAKE OF DAWN; AND RODE A WHITE HORSE THROUGH THE MANDRAKE WOOD; AND RODE A SCREECH OWL OVER THE VIA LACRIMAE.

HE WALKED THROUGH THE LOVE FIELDS, AND FROM THERE HE WALKED ON INTO NIGHTMARE.

NEIL

THE KINDLY ONES 8

WRITTEN BY NEIL GAIMAN

DRAWN BY TEDDY KRISTIANSEN

LETTERED BY TODD KLEIN
COLORED BY DANIEL VOZZO
SEPARATED BY ANDROID IMAGES
PULLED TOGETHER BY KAREN BERGER ASSOCIATED BY SHELLY ROEBERG

SANDMAN CHARACTERS CREATED BY GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG

ON WODENSDAY, HE WALKED THE CASTLE. THE HEART OF THE DREAMING IS AS LARGE AS THE DREAMING ITSELF.

HE BEGAN IN THE CELLARS BENEATH THE CASTLE, WHERE ONCE MANY WINES AND JARS AND DISTILLATES WERE STORED. HE TOOK COUNSEL WITH THE GREAT SPIDERS, AND EXCHANGED QUIET WORDS WITH MANY-LEGGED SCUTTLING THINGS, WHO VIEWED HIM AS ONE OF THEMSELVES.

THIS WAS INTERRUPTED BY THE ARRIVAL OF THE LORD OF THIS DAY. HE SPOKE TO THE DREAM KING AND LEFT.

IN THE AFTERNOON, THE LORD SHAPER WALKED THROUGH THE ROOMS OF THE CASTLE ABOVE THE GROUND, TALKING TO EACH OF THE STAFF IN TURN, HEARING THEIR GRIEVANCES, ACKNOWLEDGING THEIR SERVICE AND THEIR WORK.

HE SPOKE TO THE SCAR-DANCERS, TO THE STRAW-DUST-WOMEN, TO THE OLD MAN WITH A SWAN'S ARM WHO TENDS THE BACK STAIRS, TO THE THREE CHILDREN OF THE AUTOPSY, TO THE PAINTERS AND THE SCRIVENERS AND THE WALLS.

HE SPOKE TO PEOPLE MADE OF THIN TWIGS, AND TO THE DREAM GHOSTS WHO LEFT GLOWING FOOTPRINTS AS THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF THEIR PASSAGE.

HE SPOKE TO THE EMBRYONIC SILICON DREAMS WHO CLUSTERED IN A FAR BALLROOM, AND WHISPERED TO THEM, BRIEFLY, ABOUT THE OTHER MACHINES THAT HAD DREAMED IN THE DISTANT PAST.

WHEN THIS DAY WAS ALMOST OVER HE WENT INTO THE THRONE ROOM, AND TOOK STOCK OF CERTAIN ITEMS THERE, INCLUDING THOSE THINGS HE KEEPS IN THAT ROOM, BEHIND COLORED GLASS: THE RAW STUFF, UNTAMED, THAT IS CENTRAL TO THE DREAMING.

ON THIRSTDAY, THE KING OF DREAMS WALKED IN THE WAKING WORLD. HE STOOD, BRIEFLY, AT THE SIDE OF THE HALL, WATCHING A YOUNG WOMAN WITH A GUITAR TELL AN AUDIENCE OF A DREAM SHE HAD HAD, IN SONG.

HE STOOD IN FRONT OF A PAINTING SPRAY-PAINTED ON A WALL SOON TO BE DEMOLISHED, AND, AFTER STARING FOR SOME TIME, HE NODDED, AS IF IN APPROVAL.

IN A SMALL PARK IN CENTRAL EUROPE, HE STOPPED TO FEED THE PIGEONS, BECAUSE IT GAVE HIM PLEASURE SO TO DO, ALTHOUGH HE STOPPED WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT TO HIM THAT A SIGN SAID "*DO NOT FEED THE PIGEONS.*"

A GALAMBOKAT ETETNI TILOS

HE WALKED ACROSS THE PARK, AND WATCHED AN OPEN-AIR PERFORMANCE OF A *MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*. HE WAS MILDLY DISAPPOINTED BY THE TRANSLATION.

HE WAS, HOWEVER, EXTRAORDINARILY AMUSED BY THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ACTOR PLAYING THE PART OF BOTTOM.

LATER THAT DAY, HE VISITED EACH OF HIS PROPERTIES IN THE WAKING WORLD, CHECKING THE UPKEEP AND CONDITION OF EACH; AND THEN HE RETURNED TO THE DREAMING.

ON FIRE'S DAY, DREAM WAS REVIEWING CERTAIN OF THE VARIOUS TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE DREAMING AND OTHER STATES AND BOUNDARIES AND ENTITIES, WHEN HE WAS DISTURBED.

RIGHT. I'M DOING THIS PROPERLY. I'M IN MY PLACE WHERE THE THINGIES ARE AND I'M TALKING TO THE ONE WITH YOUR SIGGY THING ON IT AND I'M TALKING TO IT PROPERLY. CAN I COME AND SEE YOU NOW?

If you must.

I REALLY MUST.

UM. HI.

I'M LOOKING FOR MY DOGGY. DO YOU REMEMBER MY DOGGY? I GOT HIM ON THE DAY THAT I ATE ALL THE CHERRIES ALL UP.

FROM OUR BROTHER.

I have not forgotten.

WELL, I SPOKE TO OUR BROTHER AND HE SAID... THERE'S A STATUE OF YOU THAT LOOKS ALL SADLY IN THE GARDEN.

You saw him? Destruction said that?

SAID WHAT?

That there was a... statue of me that looked "all sadly."

HE NEVER SAID THAT. I SAID THAT.

Indeed. But you saw Destruction?

DESTINY. NOT DESTRUCTION. I SAW DESTINY. HE SAID YOU'D KNOW ABOUT BARNABAS. HE SAID IT COULDN'T HURT TO COME AND SEE YOU.

HE TOLD ME NOT TO COME AND SEE YOU, TOO.

HE SAID IT BOTH.

WILL YOU HELP ME FIND MY DOGGY? YOU AND ME, WE HAD SUCH A NICE TIME THE LAST TIME WE WENT LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.

Did we?

DIDN'T WE?

SO. CAN YOU COME WITH ME? AND LOOK?

Sister, I have responsibilities. I cannot leave the Dreaming at this time.

YOU USE THAT WORD SO MUCH. RESPONSIBILITIES. DON'T YOU EVER THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS? I MEAN, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU? IN YOUR HEAD?

Well, I use it to refer to that area of existence over which I exert a certain amount of control and influence.

In my case, the realm and action of dreaming.

HUMP. IT'S MORE THAN THAT. THE THINGS WE DO MAKE ECHOES. S'POSE, F'RINSTANCE, YOU STOP ON A STREET CORNER AND ADMIRE A BRILLIANT FORK OF LIGHTNING--ZAP!

WELL FOR AGES AFTER PEOPLE AND THINGS WILL STOP ON THAT VERY SAME CORNER, STARE UP AT THE SKY. THEY WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR.

SOME OF THEM MIGHT SEE A GHOST BOLT OF LIGHTNING IN THE STREET. SOME OF THEM MIGHT EVEN BE KILLED BY IT.

OUR EXISTENCE DEFORMS THE UNIVERSE.

THAT'S RESPONSIBILITY.

Delirium...?

I KNOW LOTS OF THINGS. PEOPLE THINK I DON'T BUT I REALLY DO. I KNOW MORE ABOUT US THAN ANY OF US. THAT'S JUST ONE OF THE THINGS I KNOW.

I JUST DON'T KNOW WHERE MY DOGGY IS...

HE CONSCRIPTED A SMALL, BUT HIGHLY CONSCIENTIOUS NIGHTMARE TO HELP HIS SISTER FIND HER COMPANION, AND SENT THEM ON THEIR WAY.

AND IF HE WAS SHAKEN INSIDE, OR DISTURBED IN ANY WAY BY THIS MEETING, HE GAVE NO EVIDENCE OF THIS.

Friday. Dear Journal. Well. Big news. I'm writing this by hand, so as not to wake up Jack.

Which is my big news.

It started with a late lunch, in a village pub, today.

... WELL, THE VILLAGE *ITSELF* IS IN THE DOMESDAY BOOK. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE *GRIFFIN*. PROBABLY GOES BACK ABOUT FIVE HUNDRED YEARS. I'LL ASK THE LANDLORD FOR YOU.

MM. TELL ME ABOUT MR. McGUIRE.

PAUL? HE LIVES IN THE GATEHOUSE OF A MANOR DOWN THE ROAD. BIG DECAYING PILE--THE SORT YOU USED TO BE ABLE TO FLOG TO ROCK BANDS AND MULTINATIONALS, BUT THESE DAYS YOU SPLIT UP INTO A COUPLE OF DOZEN HIGH-CLASS FLATS.

HE INVITED ME TO GO AND SEE IT.

MM. YOU *OUGHT* TO.

And then we went for a walk, and by the end of it we were freezing our buns off, and I suggested we go back to my hotel and warm up, and Jack said that he'd only got paperwork today, and he could catch up over the weekend.

So we went back to the hotel.

And we had a drink in the hotel bar, and I asked him if he wanted to stay the night with me.

And he went red and started fumfing.

CHRIST. LOOK, YOU DON'T JUST *SAY* THINGS LIKE THAT TO PEOPLE.

I JUST *DID*. YOU'RE *CUTE*. I *LIKE* YOU.

LOOK, THERE'S--I MEAN IT'S *NOT* JUST-- WELL, YOU'RE VERY *NICE*--BUT-- BUT, WELL, I *MEAN*, FOR-FOR A *START*, THERE'S THE SOLICITOR-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP TO CONSIDER.

OKAY. WELL, *YOU* CONSIDER IT. I'M IN ROOM 311. *IF* YOU TURN UP, BRING A CONDOM.

BRING A PACK.

And forty minutes later there was a knock on the door. He'd been driving around for half an hour, trying to find somewhere that sold condoms.

He was clumsy, and awkward, and kind of shy. He said I was the first woman ever to go down on him.

What the hell do they do in bed in this country, anyway? (I asked Jack, and he said they have hot water bottles.)

He's snoring gently. He smells like the inside of his stupid car.

I really like him.

OH *GOD*. IT'S *FIVE-THIRTY*. OH *GOD*. UM. YOU'RE LOVELY. FIVE-*SODDING-THIRTY*! OH *GOD*...

I HAVE TO GO.

I really, <u>really</u> like him.

FRIDAY.

C'MON. WILL YOU GET A MOVE ON?

WE HAVE AT LEAST TWENTY MINUTES UNTIL THE SHIFT CHANGES, MATTHEW. THAT SHOULD GIVE US PLENTY OF TIME.

MORGUE

UHN.

'SMATTER? THE SMELL?

NO. I *LIKE* THE SMELL.

I JUST GOT THIS *IMAGE*, IT CAME IN MY HEAD. A HALF-DISSECTED RED APE ON A SLAB. *VERY* ODD.

YOU GOT ANY IDEA WHAT IT MEANS?

I WISH I KNEW. SOMETIMES OLD MEMORIES SURFACE, LIKE FLOTSAM ON THE CHURNING SURFACE OF THE SEA. AND THEN THEY ARE GONE.

IT IS *STRANGE*, NOT BEING THE *FIRST* OF YOUR KIND.

YEAH. YOU CAN SAY *THAT* AGAIN.

HERE SHE IS.

SHIT.

THAT'S A *MESS*.

MM-HM.

OKAY. WE FOUND THE KID'S MOM'S BEST FRIEND. *NOW* WHAT?

DON'T YOU THINK IT'S AN INTERESTING COINCIDENCE? THEIR DISAPPEARANCE, FOLLOWED BY HER DEATH.

COULD BE. I CAN'T SEE THAT HER CHARRED CORPSE IS GOING TO TELL US ANYTHING, THOUGH.

YOU KNOW, IN DAYS GONE BY THEY HAD *MANY* BELIEFS ABOUT VIOLENT DEATH. THEY BELIEVED THAT A CORPSE WOULD BEGIN TO BLEED AGAIN, WHEN ITS MURDERER WALKED BY.

THEY BELIEVED THAT THE *LAST* THING ONE SAW BEFORE ONE DIED WAS RECORDED -- FROZEN--ON THE INSIDE OF THE VICTIM'S EYES...

THAT'S BULLSHIT.

NO, THAT'S THE TRUTH. IT'S JUST NO ONE KNOWS HOW TO DEVELOP THE IMAGES...

YOU'RE SICK.

NO. I AM A VISIONARY.

WHAT DID YOU SEE?

I SAW HER DIE. I SAW WHAT SHE SAW AS SHE BURNED. AND I SAW OTHER THINGS.

I SAW A HOTEL ROOM BURNING. I SAW FIRE ENGULF A CITY BUILT OF GLASS.

SKUMPF

CLUMP

YOU THINK THOSE ARE CLUES?

I THINK THEY'RE ECHOES, OR RIPPLES OR...

I...I DO KNOW WHO KILLED HER.

I KNOW WHO TOOK DANIEL HALL.

AND ON FIRE'S DAY THE PRINCE OF STORIES NOTED, WITHOUT CONCERN, BUT WITH A SMALL AMOUNT OF SURPRISE, THE ARRIVAL OF A NUMBER OF RAVENS IN HIS REALM.

SOME WERE LARGER THAN EAGLES. SOME WERE OLDER THAN GODS.

THEY STAYED IN THE SHADOWS, KAWWING AND TOKKING.

WAITING.

ON SATYRDAY, THE CASTLE RECEIVED A VISITOR.

WE ARE HERE TO TALK TO YOUR MASTER.

OUR MASTER IS SEEING NO ONE THIS DAY.

YOU *WILL* LET US IN TO THE CASTLE. OR YOU WILL SUFFER FOR IT.

LADY. LEAVE THIS PLACE. WE ARE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GATE, AND WE SHALL FULFILL OUR FUNCTION.

WILL YOU NOT LEAVE?

THEN RUN AWAY, LADY. RUN VERY *FAST.*

GRYPHON, YOU ARE OLD.

YOUR FLESH IS MEAT, AND THE MEAT IS DECAYING. YOUR BONES ARE DRY AND BRITTLE. WITHIN YOU NOW, LION AND EAGLE ABANDON THEIR BATTLE FOR DOMINANCE, AND SURRENDER TO TIME AND TO THE GRAVE.

LORD... I CANNOT FEEL YOU, LORD...

YOU KILLED HIM.

THERE. YES. WE DID.

NOW. WE NEED TO TALK TO YOUR MASTER. WE WILL NOT HARM HIM DIRECTLY AT THIS TIME. HE HAS MANY CHOICES. WE NEED MERELY TO TALK TO HIM. THIS WE SWEAR.

IF YOU WISH, YOU MAY ATTACK ME, DEFENDING THE GATE. YOU WILL DIE, LIKE YOUR FRIEND. OR YOU MAY LET ME PASS. WHICH COURSE WILL YOU TAKE?

LORD? SHALL I KILL HER?

No, Wyvern.

Let her through. I will not have either of you endangered. She has sworn her oath.

Your friend has not died in vain.

I HAVE SPOKEN TO THE LORD OF THIS REALM. HE HAS GIVEN YOU PERMISSION TO ENTER THE CASTLE, AND WILL GRANT YOU AUDIENCE.

I AM HONOR-BOUND TO WARN YOU TO STAY ON THE PATH THROUGH THE CASTLE. STRAYING FROM THE PATH COULD MEAN YOUR DESTRUCTION.

YOU KILLED MY FRIEND, WOMAN.

STRAY FROM YOUR PATH.

Come in, Lyta Hall.

WE ARE NOT LYTA HALL.

NO?

WE ARE FAR *MORE* THAN LYTA HALL.

WE ARE THE KINDLY ONES, MORPHEUS. WE ARE THE ERINYES. WE ARE VENGEANCE AND HATRED UNENDING. WE ARE YOUR DOOM.

You hurt my gatekeeper.

WE *DESTROYED* YOUR GATEKEEPER.

In a manner of speaking, perhaps. I can create another, who would not even know that it had ever died.

Why are you here?

FOR NOW, SIMPLY TO OFFER SOME ADVICE.

And your advice is?

WE WILL DESTROY YOUR DREAMWORLD, MORPHEUS. WE WILL DESTROY EVERYTHING YOU HAVE EVER LOVED. ANYTHING YOU HAVE EVER CARED FOR. AND, IN THE *END*, WE SHALL DESTROY *YOU*.

Do you have any particular reason for doing this?

YOU KILLED MY *SON*, YOU PASTY-FACED BASTARD. AND YOU'RE GOING TO *SUFFER* FOR IT.

YOU HAVE SPILLED THE BLOOD OF YOUR FAMILY, MORPHEUS. YOU KILLED YOUR SON. THAT MAKES YOU OUR LEGITIMATE PREY.

This is my world, ladies. I control it; I am responsible for it. You will neither destroy it nor will you destroy me.

NO?

HOW FARES THE GRIFFIN ON *YOUR* GATE, DREAM-KING?

Matthew?

HI, BOSS. THAT IS YOU, ISN'T IT?

Indeed. It has been five days now. The boy is not here. I am extremely unimpressed.

UH. WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS, BOSS.

HE'S RIGHT, SIRE.

Where are you two? You are not in the waking world. I sent you to the waking world.

THE CHILD IS NO LONGER IN THE WAKING WORLD, LORD. WE WILL FIND HIM, AND BRING HIM TO YOU, AS YOU COMMANDED.

SOON.

...I see.

I have a certain amount of faith and confidence in both of you. It would disappoint me exceedingly to find that it had been misplaced.

JESUS...

I ... I'VE NEVER HEARD THE BOSS SOUND LIKE THAT. HE SOUNDED SO... COLD...

I JUST HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, CORINTHIAN.

SO DO I, LITTLE RAVEN. THAT SHOULD BE IT UP AHEAD.

"YONDER LIES DA PALACE OF MY FADDER," EH? LET'S HOPE WE'RE NOT EXPECTED.

WOLF!

DO YOU THINK IT WAS A REAL WOLF? OR DO YOU THINK WE'RE EXPECTED?

WE'RE A LONG WAY FROM THE REAL WORLD NOW, MATTHEW. I THINK WE CAN ASSUME THAT WE ARE EXPECTED.

BUT REAL OR NOT, THAT WAS STILL MY FIRST KILL OF THIS LIFE, MATTHEW.

AND THE EYES ARE MINE.

KRAK

AND, AS SATURDAY CONCLUDED,

...LUCIFER PLAYED A MEDLEY OF LITTLE-KNOWN COLE PORTER SONGS, BEGINNING WITH MILDLY RISQUÉ SONGS, SUCH AS "PETS," "MY MOST INTIMATE FRIEND" AND "AFTER ALL, I'M ONLY A SCHOOLGIRL," AND CONCLUDING WITH THREE SONGS PORTER HAD EVER ONLY PLAYED TO INTIMATES AT EXTREMELY PRIVATE PARTIES.

HE WAS STARTING TO FIND HIMSELF BORED BY MUSIC; AND HE FOUND HIMSELF, DURING THE FINAL CHORUS OF "SHE NEVER WENT DOWN ON THE TITANIC," OBSERVING WITHIN HIMSELF THE URGE TO MOVE ON.

...THE WITCH-WOMAN WHO NOW CALLED HERSELF LARISSA LAY ON THE CAMP-BED IN HER ROOM, READING AN IMPROVING BOOK, AND PICKING AT A BOWL OF LAMB STEW.

SHE IGNORED THE MOANS OF HER NEW HOUSEMATE.

THE CAMP-BED WAS NEW. IT HAD COST HER $70, AND THAT, TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER EXPENSES SHE HAD RECENTLY INCURRED, HAD PRETTY MUCH CLEANED OUT HER SAVINGS.

SHE HAD NOTICED CERTAIN PECULIARITIES OF THE STARLINGS' FLIGHT AT DUSK THAT EVENING; LARISSA WAS A MORE-THAN-COMPETENT AUGUR, AND SHE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HER VISITOR OF THE FOLLOWING DAY.

JOHN BAUER

...NUALA SAT IN THE GARDEN OF HER CITADEL ON THE EDGE OF THE FOREST BY TIR-NA-NOG, TRYING TO RECALL WHAT SHE HAD DONE WITH HER TIME, IN THE DAYS BEFORE THE DREAMING.

SHE HAD DANCED, AND SUNG, AND FLIRTED. SOMETIMES SHE WOULD CURSE, OTHER TIMES SHE WOULD BESTOW SMALL FAVORS. TIME PASSED.

SHE HAD HAD NO PURPOSE THEN; AND STILL, SHE HAD BEEN CONTENT.

SHE FINGERED THE STONE AROUND HER NECK, UNCONSCIOUSLY, AND RECALLED HAPPINESS.

dee dee dee

IT'S ALMOST SUNDAY. AND I'M SITTING HERE LATE ON SATURDAY NIGHT, RE-READING MY OLD JOURNAL ENTRIES AND WONDERING AT MYSELF.

HOW CAN I HAVE BEEN THAT SHALLOW?

WELL, I WAS. IT'S AMAZING.

It's not that I'm heartless.

I mean, I get upset with things, just like anyone. And I try to do good things and to not do bad things, because life is simpler and I'm happier if I do good things.

~~But I wish~~

I mean, why do people fall in love with me? It's not like I'm pretty, a it's not like I let them know I'm ri

I like sex. I like being part of something bigger and older and more powerful than I am.

And I like having other people aroun if it's on my terms, and they keep o of the way when I want to work, and if they're no bother.

Why doesn't it hurt me more when it ends? Why don't I feel it?

dee dee dee

dee dee dee dee...

WHAT A *BITCH* YOU WERE, ROSALITA. WHAT A COLD BITCH-ON-WHEELS.

WELL?

DO I *DARE*?

SURE I DO.

HELLO. JACK? IT'S ME. IT'S ROSE. SURPRISE!

HELLO, MISS WALKER... HOW ON EARTH DID YOU GET THIS NUMBER?

HOW? I ASKED THE HOTEL DESK CLERK HOW TO DIAL INFORMATION. I THINK HE LIKES ME...

LISTEN. IT'S *AWFULLY* LONELY HERE. YOU KNOW WHAT *I* WAS THINKING? WHY DON'T YOU COME DOWN TO THE *HOTEL*? I'LL ORDER A BOTTLE OF *WINE* AND WE CAN...

ROSE, THAT WOULD BE A *TERRIBLY* BAD IDEA.

WELL? *WHY* WOULD IT BE A BAD IDEA? WASN'T IT GOOD LAST NIGHT? WASN'T IT *GREAT*?

IT WAS UNDENIABLY PLEASANT. BUT THIS REALLY *ISN'T* AN IDEAL TIME TO DISCUSS IT.

UH. YOU AREN'T ALONE, ARE YOU?

VERY PER-CEPTIVE.

UM. THE PERSON YOU AREN'T ALONE WITH. THIS IS SOME-ONE YOU SHOULD HAVE *TOLD* ME ABOUT, ISN'T IT?

EXACTLY.

THEN THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO *SAY*, IS THERE?

I'M AFRAID *NOT*.

FUCK.

AND ON SON'S DAY, THEY HELD THE FIRST FUNERAL.

TO BE CONTINUED

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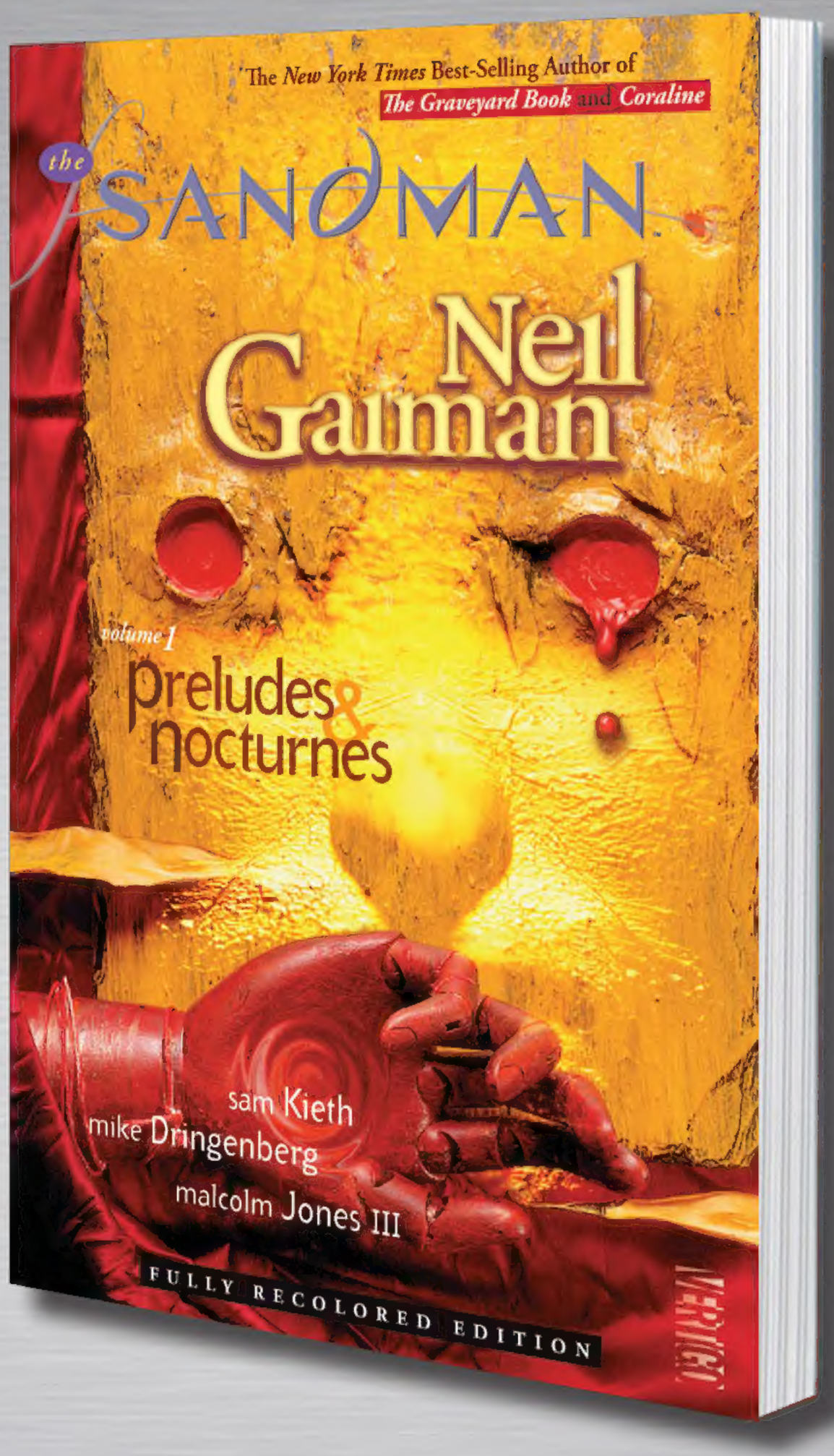

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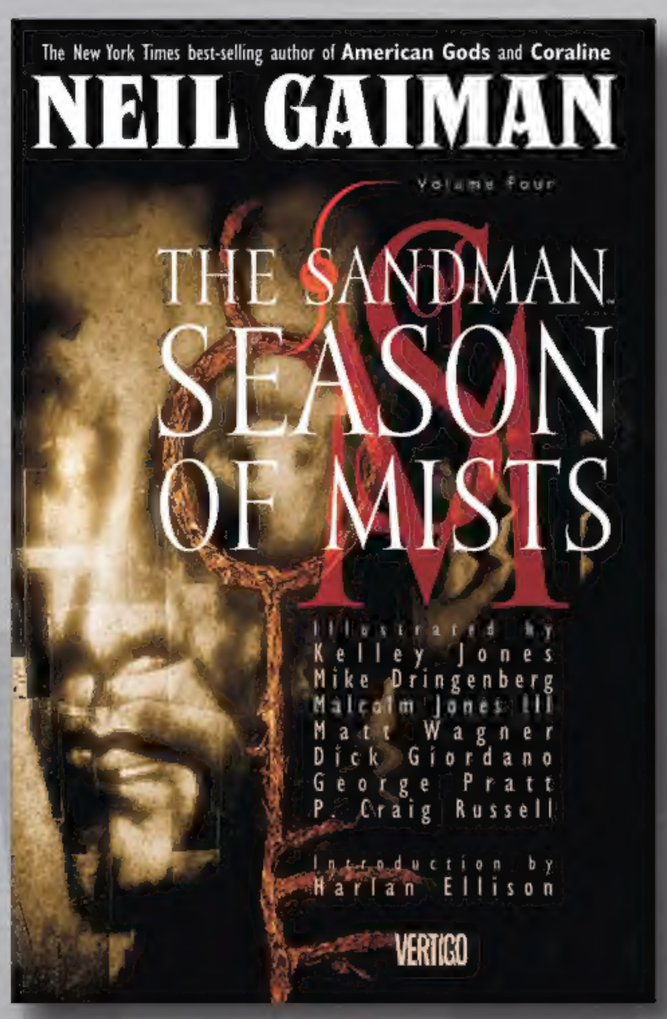

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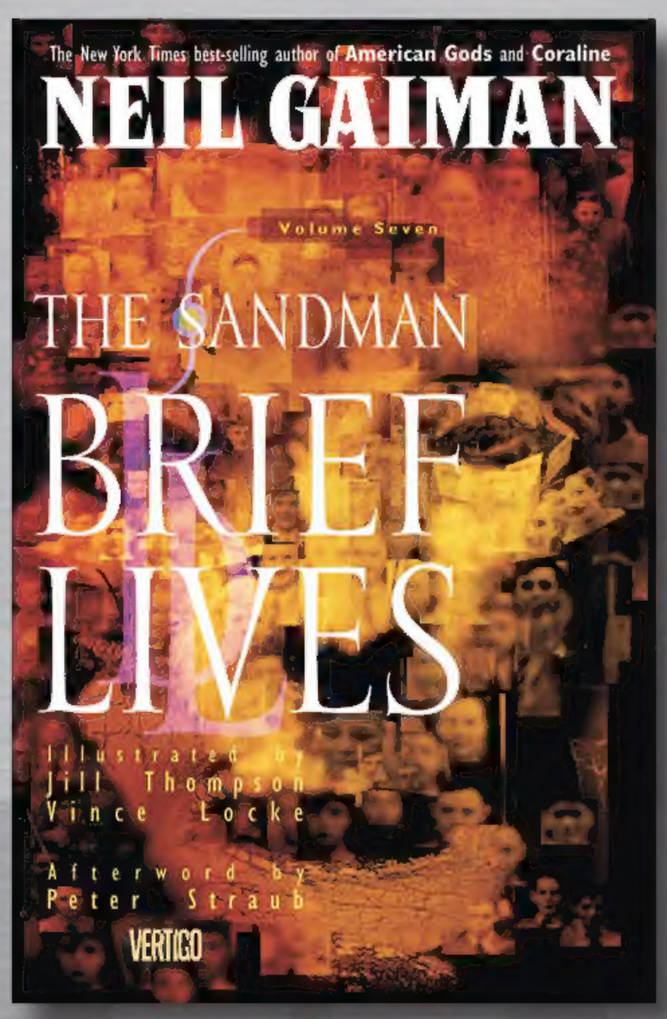

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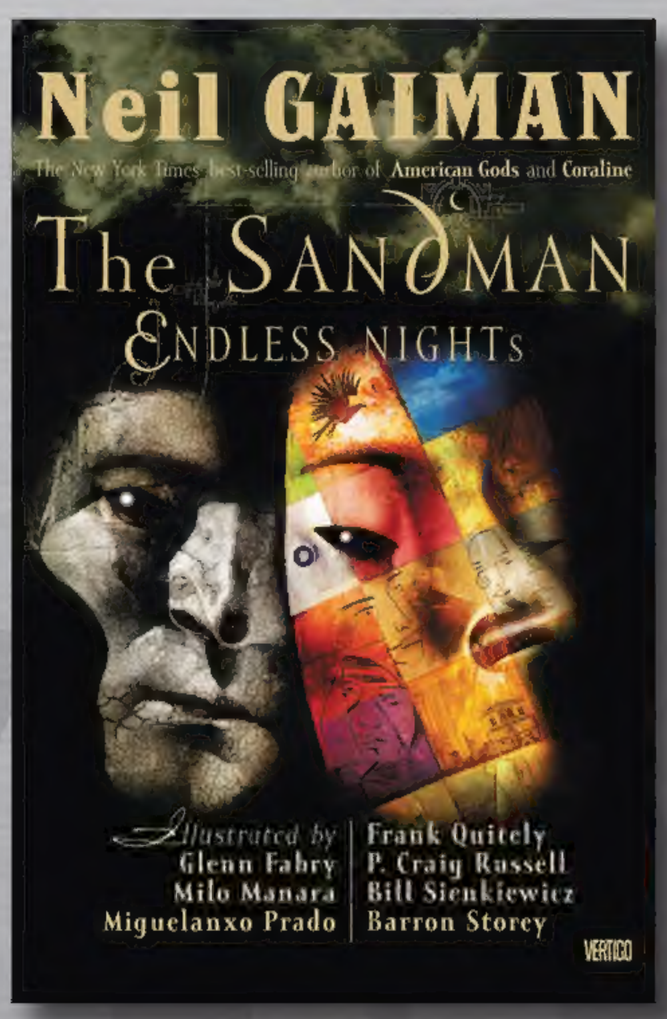

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